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THE MODERN CITY AND THE MUNICIPAL FRANCHISE FOR WOMEN

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The Modern City and the Municipal Franchise for Women

By Jane Addams.

We all know that the modern city is a new thing upon the face of the earth, and that everywhere its growth has been phenomenal, whether we look at Moscow, Berlin, Paris, New York or Chicago. With or without the medieval foundation, these cities are merely resultants of the vast crowds of people who have collected at certain points which have become manufacturing and distributing centers.

As the city itself originated for the common protection of the people, and was built about a suitable center of defence which formed a citadel, so we can trace the beginnings of the municipal franchise to the time when the problems of municipal government were still largely those of protecting the city from rebellion from within and from invasion from without. A voice in city government, as it was extended from the nobles who alone bore arms, was naturally given solely to those who were valuable to the military system. There was a certain logic in giving the franchise only to grown men, when the existence and stability of the city depended upon their defence, and when the ultimate value of the elector could be reduced to his ability to perform military duty. It was fair that only those who were liable to a sudden call to arms should be

selected to decide as to the relations which the city bore to rival cities, and that the vote for war should be cast by the same men who bore the brunt of battle and the burden of protection. We are told by historians that citizens were first called together, in those assemblages which were the beginning of popular government, only if a war was to be declared or an expedition to be undertaken.

But rival cities, even St. Louis and Chicago, have long since ceased to settle their claims by force of arms, and we shall have to admit, I think, that this early test of the elector is no longer fitted to the modern city.

It has been well said that the modern city is a stronghold of industrialism, quite as the feudal city was a stronghold of militarism; but the modern cities fear no enemies and rivals from without, and their problems of government are solely internal. Affairs, for the most part, are going badly in these great new centers, in which the quickly-congregated population has not yet learned to arrange its affairs satisfactorily. Unsanitary housing, poisonous sewage, contaminated water, infant mortality, the spread of contagion, adulterated food, impure milk, smoke-laden air, ill-ventilated factories, dangerous occupations, juvenile crime, unwholesome crowding, prostitution and drunkenness, are the enemies which the modern cities must face and overcome, would they survive. Logically, their electorate should be made up of those who can bear a valiant part in this arduous contest, those who in the past have at least attempted to care for children, to

clean houses, to prepare foods, to isolate the family from moral dangers; those who have traditionally taken care of that side of life which inevitably becomes the subject of municipal consideration and control as soon as the population is congested. To test the elector's fitness to deal with this situation by his ability to bear arms is absurd. These problems must be solved, if they are solved at all, not from the military point of view, not even from the industrial point of view, but from a third, which is rapidly developing in all the great cities of the world—the human-welfare point of view.

There are many evidences that we are emerging from a period of industrialism into a period of humanitarianism, and that personal welfare is now being considered a legitimate object of government. The most noticeable manifestation of this civic humanitarianism is to be found in those cities where the greatest abuses of industrialism and materialism exist, where a thousand conflicts arise between the individual interests and the social interests. It is in these cities that selfishness is first curbed and the higher social feelings developed, and in them men learn to submit to a minute regulation of their affairs which they would find intolerable anywhere else.

Because the delicate matters of human growth and welfare cannot be nurtured by mere brute strength, a new history of municipal government begins with a serious attempt to make life possible and human in large cities which have been devoted so exclusively to industrial affairs that they must plead guilty to Ruskin's indictment,

that they are unspeakably ugly, and unnecessarily devoid of green and growing things.

A city is in many respects a great business corporation, but in other respects it is enlarged housekeeping. If American cities have failed in the first, partly because office-holders have carried with them the predatory instinct learned in competitive business, and cannot help "working a good thing" when they have an opportunity, may we not say that city housekeeping has failed partly because women, the traditional housekeepers, have not been consulted as to its multiform activities? The men of the city have been carelessly indifferent to much of its civic housekeeping, as they have always been indifferent to the details of the household. They have totally disregarded a candidate's capacity to keep the streets clean, preferring to consider him in relation to the national tariff or to the necessity for increasing the national navy, in a pure spirit of reversion to the traditional type of government, which had to do only with enemies and outsiders.

It is difficult to see what military prowess has to do with the multiform duties which, in a modern city, include the care of parks and libraries, superintendence of markets, sewers and bridges, the inspection of provisions and boilers, and the proper disposal of garbage. It has nothing to do with the building department, which the city maintains that it may see to it that the basements are dry, that the bedrooms are large enough to afford the required cubic feet of air, that the plumbing is sanitary, that the gas pipes do not leak, that the tenement house court

is large enough to afford light and ventilation, that the stairways are fireproof. The ability to carry arms has nothing to do with the health department maintained by the city, which provides that children are vaccinated, that contagious diseases are isolated and placarded, that the spread of tuberculosis is curbed, that the water is free from typhoid infection. Certainly the military conception of society is remote from the functions of the school boards, whose concern it is that children are educated, that they are supplied with kindergartens, and are given a decent place in which to play. The very multifariousness and complexity of a city government demand the help of minds accustomed to detail and variety of work, to a sense of obligation for the health and welfare of young children, and to a responsibility for the cleanliness and comfort of other people.

Because all these things have traditionally been in the hands of women, if they take no part in them now they are not only missing the education which the natural participation in civic life would bring to them, but they are losing what they have always had. From the beginning of tribal life, they have been held responsible for the health of the community, a function which is now represented by the health department. From the days of the cave dwellers, so far as the home was clean and wholesome, it was due to their efforts, which are now represented by the Bureau of Tenement House Inspection. From the period of the primitive village, the only public sweeping which was performed was what they undertook in their divers dooryards, that which is now

represented by the Bureau of Street Cleaning. Most of the departments in a modern city can be traced to woman's traditional activity; but, in spite of this, so soon as these old affairs were turned over to the care of the city, they slipped from woman's hands, apparently because they then became matters for collective action and implied the use of the franchise. Because the franchise had in the first instance been given to the man who could fight, because in the beginning he alone could vote who could carry a weapon, it was considered an improper thing for a woman to possess it.

Is it quite public-spirited for woman to say: "We will take care of these affairs so long as they stay in our own houses, but if they go outside and concern so many people that they cannot be carried on without the mechanism of the vote, we will drop them; it is true that these activities which women have always had are not at present being carried on very well by the men in most of the great American cities, but, because we do not consider it 'lady-like' to vote, we will let them alone"?

Because women consider the government men's affair, and something which concerns itself with elections and alarms, they have become so confused in regard to their traditional business in life, the rearing of children, that they bear with complacency a statement made by the Nestor of sanitary reformers that one-half of the tiny lives which make up the city's death-rate each year might be saved by a more thorough application of sanitary science. Because it implies the use

of the suffrage, they do not consider it women's business to save these lives. Are we going to lose ourselves in the old circle of convention, and add to that sum of wrong doing which is continually committed in the world, because we do not look at things as they really are? Old-fashioned ways, which no longer apply to changed conditions, are a snare in which the feet of women have always become readily entangled. It is so easy to be stupid, and to believe that things which used to exist still go on, long after they are past; to commit irreparable blunders because we fail to correct our theories by our changing experience. So many of the stumbling blocks against which we fall are the opportunities to which we have not adjusted ourselves! We keep hold of a convention which no longer squares with our genuine insight into life, and we are slow to follow a clue which might enable us to solace and improve the life about us, because it shocks an obsolete ideal.

Why is it that women do not vote upon these matters which concern them so intimately? Why do they not follow these vital affairs, and feel responsible for their proper administration, even although they have become municipalized? What would the result have been could women have regarded the suffrage, not as a right or a privilege, but as a mere piece of governmental machinery, without which they could not perform their traditional functions under the changed conditions of city life? Could we view the whole situation as a matter of obligation and normal development, it would be much simplified. We

are at the beginning of a prolonged effort to incorporate a progressive, developing city life, founded upon a response to the needs of all the people, into the requisite legal enactments and civic institutions. To be in any measure successful, this effort will require all the intelligent powers of observation, all the sympathy, all the common sense which may be gained from the whole adult population.

Let us take up in detail two or three of the distinctive problems of the modern city, Chicago, if you please, discovering as fairly as we may the traditional attitude woman has held toward these problems, and how far it would be but natural that she should contribute toward their solution were she but possessed of the municipal franchise. To instance three of these problems:

(1) Insufficient regulation of industrial conditions.

(2) Americanizing of immigrants who live in cities.

(3) The great increase in juvenile criminality which modern cities present.

The statement is sometimes made that the franchise for women would be valuable only so far as the educated women exercised it. This statement totally disregards the fact that those matters in which woman's judgment is most needed are far too primitive and basic to be largely influenced by what we call education. The sanitary condition of all the factories and workshops, for instance, in which the industrial processes are at present carried on in great cities,

intimately affects the health and lives of thousands of working women. It is questionable whether women today, in spite of the fact that there are myriads of them in factories and shops, are doing their full share of the world's work in the lines of production which have always been theirs. Even two centuries ago, they did practically all of the spinning, dyeing, weaving and sewing; they carried on much of the brewing and baking, and thousands of operations which have been pushed out of the domestic system into the factory system. But simply to keep on doing the work which their grandmothers did was to find themselves surrounded by conditions over which they have no control. Sometimes when I see dozens of young girls going into the factories of the American Biscuit Company on the West Side of Chicago, they appear for the moment as a mere cross section in the long procession of women who have furnished the breadstuffs from time immemorial, from the savage woman who ground the meal and baked a flat cake, through innumerable cottage hearths, kitchens and bake ovens, to this huge concern in which they are still carrying on their traditional business. But always before, during the ages of this unending procession, women themselves were able to dictate concerning the hours and the immediate conditions of their work. Even grinding the meal and baking the cake in the ashes was diversified by many other activities. But suddenly since the application of steam to the process of kneading bread or turning the spindle, which really means only a differing motor power and not in the least

an essential change in her work, the woman has been denied the privilege of regulating the conditions which immediately surround her. Even the sweatshops in which she carries on her old business of making clothing had to be redeemed, so far as they have been redeemed, by the votes of men, who passed an anti-sweatshop law, by the city fathers who, after much pleading, were induced to order the inspection of sweatshops, that they might be made to comply with sanitary regulations. That this pleading and persuading was done in Chicago by women, simply shows the stupidity and indirection of the entire situation. Women directly controlled the surroundings of their work when their arrangements were domestic, but they cannot do it now unless they have the franchise, as yet the only mechanism devised by which a city selects its representatives, and by which a number of people are able to embody their collective will in legislation. For a hundred years England has been legislating upon the subject of unsanitary workshops, long and exhausting hours of work, night work for women, occupations in which pregnant women may be employed, and hundreds of other restrictions which we are only beginning to consider objects of legislation here. When it comes, however, American women will have no vote, and no opportunity to indicate how far it is reasonable to attempt legislative regulation, although English women, so far as these regulations are municipal, are more fortunate.

To consider the second problem, which we are pleased to call the Americanization of im-

migrants: At present, in our efforts to introduce the newcomers from Greece, or Italy, or Poland, or Syria, to American institutions, we pin our faith upon the immigrants' ability to understand the Constitution of the United States, although we could select nothing from our complex governmental arrangements so remote from their daily experiences as is this Constitution. The immigrants who are learning to obey the law in Chicago, those who are most rapidly realizing something of governmental standards in America, are probably those who are required to conform the life and education of their children to the present child-labor and compulsory education laws. An Italian peasant from the country where he has quite properly picked oranges and olives from the time he could toddle, does not realize the different surroundings of work in the city, and what it means to put a little child into a factory. When he learns that his child cannot earn money until he is fourteen, and that he must send him to school until then, because these are American conditions, he begins to realize that the governmental demands from him a sacrifice, because a democratic government implies an educated citizen, and that the immigrant to a democracy must pay the cost. The advantages of our government are not to be obtained by simply learning about a constitution, but must be bought through blood and tears, as it were; but this sort of legislation, which demands sacrifice, which raises the standard of life and education, and through his family and immediate surroundings really touches the immigrant, is exactly the

kind of legislation in which his wife is quite as much interested as he is. Immigrant women are entitled to their opportunities for understanding and discussing the laws and ordinances which surround them.

We might illustrate from the Greek, who slaughters a sheep in his own basement, as in the Homeric period. He has come from a Greek village, and the difference between the old village life and the life in a great city must be made clear to him by a very concrete experience. Perhaps nothing will so dramatize the difference for him as the fact that he endangers the health of his neighbors by continuing his old customs, and that to live in a city means to make sacrifices for it, and to adapt yourself to your neighbor's chance for health. Yet all these things of domestic arrangement and neighborhood relation belong naturally to women, who alone remain during the day in the neighborhood composed of households, while the men of the same families, the electors in whom is lodged the power to regulate and control these matters by legal enactment, are working in factories, shops or offices in the commercial and industrial districts of the city.

The old social problems were too often made a cause of war in the belief that all difficulties could be settled by an appeal to arms. But certainly these subtler problems which confront the modern cosmopolitan city, the problems of race antagonisms and economic adjustments, must be settled by a more searching and genuine method than mere prowess can possibly afford.

We are accustomed to say, even in regard to

federal affairs, that a sense of national stability is of even more fundamental importance than national defense. We add to that, and this applies to the city government as well, that anything which diminishes the elector's love of country or interest in its preservation is a menace to the nation; and in the past great stress has been laid upon ownership and that sense of responsibility which property entails. But in the modern city the renters outnumber the landlords a thousand fold, and the ownership of the home becomes less frequent as we leave the farm and the village and proceed to the great centers. As the modern city dweller looks about for other forms of investment as a substitute for real estate, so we must appeal to those interests which are more general, more primordial, and much more trustworthy, in our effort to substitute in the modern city the sense of stability for the spirit of defense. If one could connect these old maternal anxieties, which are really the basis of family and tribal life, with the candidates who are seeking offices, it would never be necessary to scold either men or women for remaining at home on election day.

To consider the third problem: The one place at which government is increasing its function perhaps most rapidly in the cities, is that in relation to juvenile criminals, largely in connection with the newly established juvenile courts. We are getting an entirely new set of machinery with which we may deal with the bad boy, as we call him, although he may not be bad at all; we can hardly diagnose him yet, he is so new,

or rather, the crowded city conditions which have produced him are so new. Officers are appointed and paid from public funds to watch over the boy who has once been brought into court. They see to it that he is properly employed, and that he has no chance to go very far astray. Who is it that should vote upon the election of a judge for the juvenile court, or be interested that the court should be properly instituted and its powers adequately curbed? Shall we say only the busy men of the city, or only the men and women with property? What in regard to the mothers of these same boys, and the teachers who have had to do with them day by day, until they know their weaknesses and temptations, better perhaps than any one else? Shall they have no vote upon matters touching the functions of the juvenile court? In Denver, where the women have the franchise, a very remarkable juvenile court judge was not nominated as a candidate on either ticket in a recent election, because he had failed to please the politicians of either party. The women of Denver, by petition, put Judge Lindsey upon an independent ticket and elected him. It was not merely the women interested in the philanthropic activities of Denver; they were joined by the women who had seen the lives and known the experiences of the boys, and who had realized the beneficial results of the juvenile court, and who wished to have them continued.

It is interesting to find that, even in the one department of city government in which military defense is still entrenched, the one place in which the old type of government naturally survives, the

police department—even here the old ideals are calling upon the new for help. The police are asking that the street gangs shall be turned into boys' clubs, and Boston, at least, has gravely considered the erection of municipal buildings to house such clubs. The probation officers insist that healthy amusements must be organized for wards of the court, if they are to be controlled. The police seek help from the school officials that the truants may be kept from becoming delinquents; and next winter groups of women will beg legislators to extend the compulsory education law so that boys of fourteen who do not work may be kept in school until they are sixteen, in order that they may not roam the streets and constantly afford more material for the policeman's club. Although women are naturally greatly interested in the causes and effects of juvenile crime, it is still impossible for a woman in Chicago to cast a vote in regard to any of these affairs. A surprising amount of recent municipal legislation has been the result of charitable efforts in which women have borne their full share. The determined effort to control and eradicate tuberculosis is an example of this, as is the supplying of pure milk to the children of the poor, which in Rochester, at least, has become a municipal function; or the school nurses who have been instituted in New York and Baltimore.

We certainly may hope for two results if the municipal franchise be granted to women: (1) An opportunity to fulfill their old duties and obligations with the safeguards and the con-

sideration which the ballot alone can secure for them under the changed conditions; and (2) the education which participation in actual affairs always brings. As we believe that woman has no right to allow the things to drop away from her that really belong to her, so we contend that ability to perform an obligation comes very largely in proportion as that obligation is conscientiously assumed.

Out of the medieval city, founded upon militarism, there arose in the thirteenth century a new order, the middle class, whose importance rested, not upon birth or arms, but upon wealth, intelligence and organization. They achieved a sterling success in the succeeding six centuries of industrialism, because they were essential to the existence and development of the industrial era. Perhaps we can forecast the career of woman, the citizen, if she is permitted to bear an elector's part in the coming period of humanitarianism, in which government must concern itself with human welfare. She would bear her share of civic responsibility, not because she clamors for her rights, but because she is essential to the normal development of the city of the future.

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